

WORKING WITH NEW CASE MANAGERS

**CONTINUING TO MOVE TOWARDS
PERMANENCY - PERSPECTIVE OF THE
BENCH AND BAR**

Hon. Maureen Wood, Esq., CWLS

Christopher Hempfling, Esq., CWLS

DISCLAIMER

- All information provided by the presenters is based upon their own opinions and does not represent any agency, or governmental organization. For specific questions regarding any information contained within this presentation, please consult with an attorney.

USE OF INTERACTIVE POLLING POLL EVERYWHERE

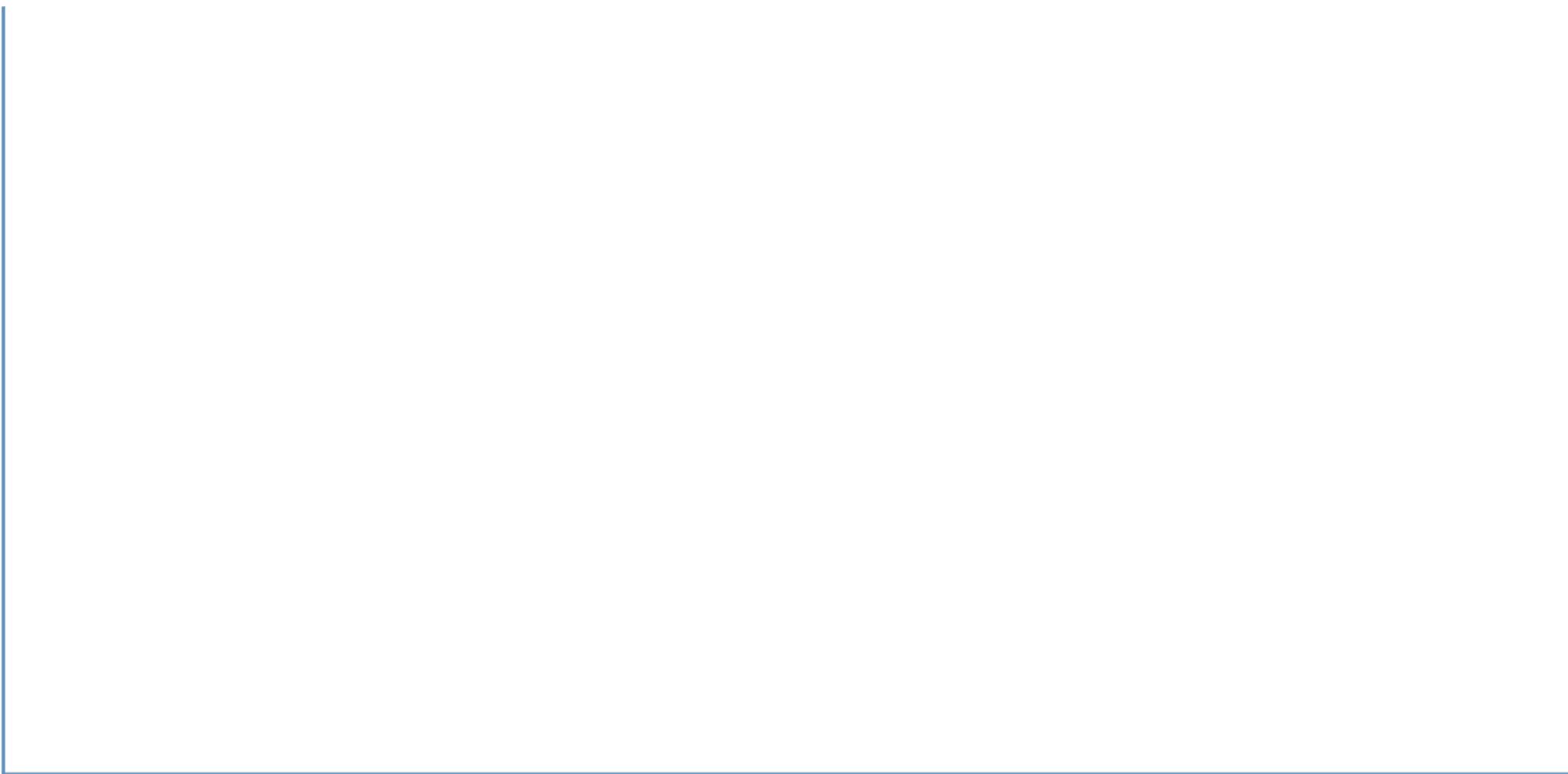
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Is case manager turnover an issue in your jurisdiction?

Yes

Average

No

A vertical axis for a poll with labels 'Yes', 'Average', and 'No'. The axis is a thin blue line on the left side of the chart area. The labels are positioned to the left of the axis line.

IS TURNOVER A PROBLEM?? (YES!!)

- Nationally:
 - Texas – Annual turnover is at 25 percent
 - Baton Rouge – Annual turnover is at 50 percent
 - Estimated national average turnover rate is 20 – 40 percent
- Georgia:
 - As of 2015 annual turnover was 35 percent.
 - Entry level salary: \$28,000 with a Bachelor's and \$32,000 with a Master's
 - Average caseload numbers 19 clients per case manager, goal of 15 clients
 - July 2017 – State budget provided for a 19 percent increase of annual salary to DFCS employees.

Why do you believe case manager turnover occurs?

What impact do you believe case manager turnover has on moving cases towards permanency?

THE IMPACT OF CASEWORKER TURNOVER ON PERMANENCY

- Higher caseloads for investigators and foster care caseworkers
- Lower quality services provided to dependent youth and families
- Clients' confidence in their care and willingness to comply with bureaucracy can be lost
- Foster youth experience: lack of stability, loss of trusting relationships; reduced likelihood to be placed in a permanent situation within ASFA timeframes

What percentage of children achieve permanency within one year with one case manager?

0 to 25
Percent

26 to 50
Percent

51 to 75
Percent

76 to 100
Percent

What percentage of children achieve permanency within one year with two case managers?

0 to 25
Percent

26 to 50
Percent

51 to 75
Percent

76 to 100
Percent

What percentage of children achieve permanency within one year with three case managers?

0 to 25
Percent

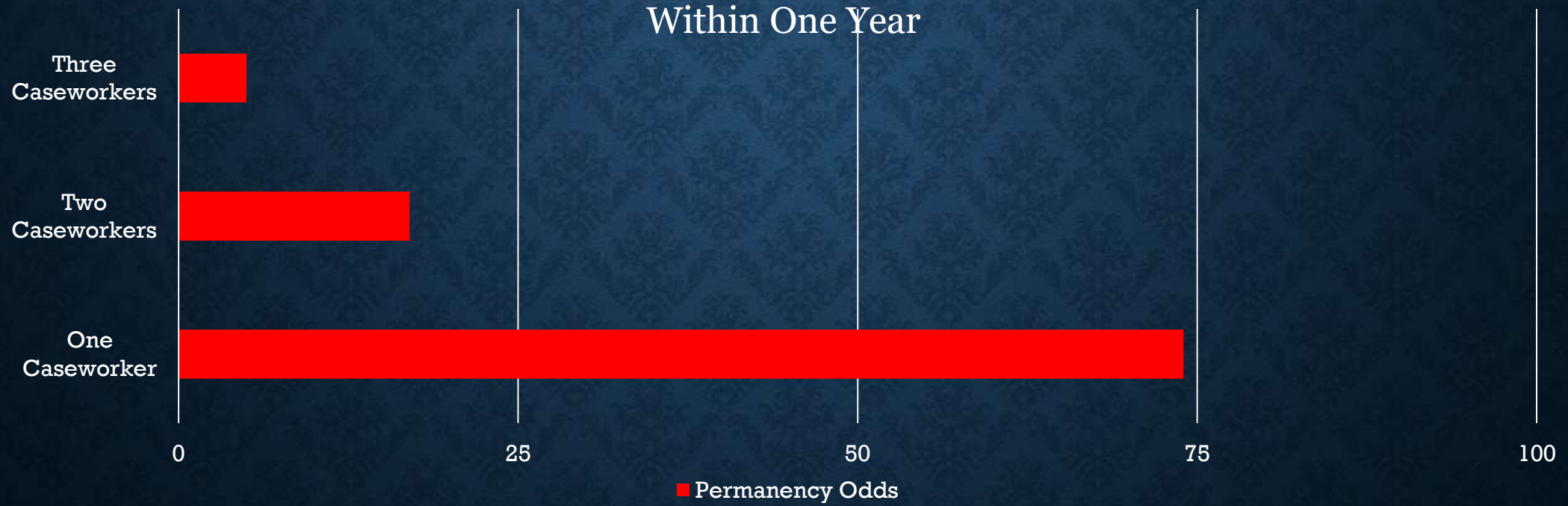
26 to 50
Percent

51 to 75
Percent

76 to 100
Percent

PERMANENCY ODDS DECREASE WITH EACH NEW CASEWORKER WITHIN A YEAR

Percentage of Children Who Achieve Permanency With Each New Caseworker Within One Year



REAL LIFE EXAMPLE

- Jane has been in care for three years, has cerebral palsy, and is unable to walk or talk;
- Jane will need a full-time caretaker for the remainder of her life;
- Jane's FP is unwilling to adopt due to her advanced age and the knowledge that Jane will need life-long care;
- After great efforts, Jane's foster care worker has identified a forever home for Jane;
- Jane's foster care worker leaves the agency, her position goes unfilled for several months;
- The identified forever family loses contact with the local DFCS office (phone calls aren't answered, voice mails and emails are full or bounce back or aren't returned);
- The identified forever family assumes Jane is no longer available to be adopted;
- The identified family moves on in their search to adopt;
- A new foster care worker is hired;
- The search for a forever home for Jane starts all over again;
- **What role has caseworker turnover had in this child's chance at achieving permanency?**
- **What could/should have been done differently?**

REAL LIFE EXAMPLE

- Susan's children came into care due to her untreated mental health and substance abuse issues;
- Susan is very eager to work with the Department and cure the issues of dependency so that her children can return to her home;
- Susan undergoes a battery of tests and evaluations (psychological evaluation, parental fitness evaluation, substance abuse evaluation);
- Susan's caseworker gets verbal recommendations from the evaluators (written evaluations are not complete) and makes referrals to service providers for services;
- Susan's caseworker leaves, several months pass before a new caseworker is assigned;
- New caseworker is assigned; however, Susan's written evaluations and referrals can't be located; New Caseworker asks Susan to submit to all new evaluations;
- Susan has gone several months without receiving any treatment for her mental health and substance abuse issues, Susan feels hopeless and is starting to dive deeper into her addiction;
- **What role did caseworker turnover have in this scenario?**
- **What could/should have been done differently?**

OVERALL CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING PERMANENCY WITH HIGH CASE MANAGER TURNOVER

- Lack of understanding of legal requirements and obligations
- Unfamiliarity with legal procedures
- Unfamiliarity with court expectations
- Lack of time to commit to adequate preparation
- Inability or unsure how to adequately prepare
- Difficulty of not maintaining focus on the big picture

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO ACHIEVING PERMANENCY AT ADJUDICATION HEARINGS

- **Hurdles to Achieving Permanency**
 - Efforts to prevent removal
 - Referrals for services with follow-up
 - Beginning stages of diligent search
- **Solutions to Achieving Permanency**
 - In-depth discussion regarding relatives
 - Proper staffing
 - Attorney client communication - Case Strategy

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO ACHIEVING PERMANENCY AT DISPOSITION AND JUDICIAL REVIEW HEARINGS

- **Hurdles to Achieving Permanency**

- Effective and appropriate case planning
- Effective and appropriate Diligent Search
- Service referrals
- Comprehensive understanding of dependency issues

- **Solutions to Achieving Permanency**

- Providing any available resources for the child's well-being
- Intentional placement strategy
- Party participation and buy-in with case plan and Diligent Search development
- Ensuring referred services align with parents needs and abilities
- Thorough review of all assessments and reports

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO ACHIEVING PERMANENCY AT PERMANENCY HEARINGS

- **Hurdles to Achieving Permanency**
 - Increased likelihood of new case manager
 - Difficulty of comprehensively analyzing the family
 - Evaluation of effectiveness of current services
- **Solutions to Achieving Permanency**
 - Potential reevaluations
 - Parent input and participation towards permanency
 - Discussion concerning overarching dependency and solutions
 - Child's input, wishes, and desires

What strategies do you believe a Judge could utilize to decrease case worker turnover and increase permanency?

WAYS TO HELP ACHIEVE PERMANENCY FROM THE BENCH

- Recognize the Problem and Embrace It
- Set Expectations and Standards Within the Courtroom
- Find Ways To Bridge The Gap

RECOGNIZE THE PROBLEM AND EMBRACE IT

- Acknowledge the fact that there is a high caseworker turnover rate in your jurisdiction
- Operate under the assumption that the problem is here to stay
- Find ways to be supportive and welcoming to new caseworkers (help ease courtroom anxiety)
 - Provide input during legal trainings
 - Meet and greet new caseworkers

SET EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS WITHIN THE COURTROOM

- Require Statutory Compliance Despite Turnover
 - Require Ongoing Diligent Search Efforts
 - Require Timely Case Plan Submission
 - Require That Children Be Brought To Court
 - Require That Placements be notified of Court Dates
 - Require That Parties be Notified In Advance of Placement Changes
 - Require Timely Evaluations: Trauma Assessments, Babies Can't Wait Referrals, EPAC Assessments, etc.
 - Expect Collaboration Amongst DFCS and CASA
 - Parents required to maintain communication attorney, case worker, and CASA
 - Parents required to regularly attend court proceedings and DFCS meetings
 - Parents required to regularly attend court-ordered visitation

FIND WAYS TO BRIDGE THE GAP

- Explore The Possibility of Accountability Court In Your Jurisdiction
 - Family Treatment Court assists with:
 - Case Management (weekly contact with parents)
 - Surveillance (random and consistent home visits)
 - Drug Screens (2-3x per week)
 - Treatment (level II intensive treatment in the community)
- Encourage and Support Local CASA
 - Support local CASA recruitment efforts
 - Encourage collaboration amongst CASA, DFCS, Attorneys
- Appoint Qualified Parent Attorneys, Child Attorneys, Guardian *Ad Litem*s
 - Reputation for Providing Quality Representation
 - Juvenile Law Training (Years of Experience and CLEs)
 - CWLS (Child Welfare Law Specialists)

What strategies do you believe an attorney (SAAG, GAL, Parent) could utilize to reduce turnover and improve permanency?

WAYS TO HELP ACHIEVE PERMANENCY FROM THE BAR

- Working as Agency Attorney
 - Thoroughly Staff Cases
 - Provide Regular Legal Trainings
 - Collaborate with CASA
 - Provide Tools and Resources for Efficient Preparation
 - Active participation with any available accountability court
- Working as GAL or Parent Attorney
 - Maintain Regular Contact with SAAG and CASA
 - Nothing at Hearing Should be a Surprise
 - Familiarize Yourself with Community Resources
 - Familiarize Yourself with DFCS Policies
 - Active participation with any available accountability court

WAYS TO HELP ACHIEVE PERMANENCY, CONT.

- As Agency Attorney – Utilization of forms helps ensure case managers know foundational information
- Frequently Utilized Forms
 - Legal Action Requests
 - Court Reports
 - Permanency Reports
- Legal Education

LEGAL ACTION REQUESTS

- Used for any type of proceeding
- Identifies key participants and provides relevant information
- Outlines reason for request
- Identifies any needed witnesses and contact information
- Includes any relevant exhibits

COURT REPORTS

- Updates SAAG Concerning Parents' Compliance with Case Plan Goals and Steps
- Updates SAAG Concerning Child(ren) Services, Education, Medical and Dental
- Updates SAAG Concerning Case Direction
- Identifies any Needed Witnesses
- Identifies any Potential Evidence

PERMANENCY REPORTS

- Required by O.C.G.A. § 15-11-231
 - Must be submitted to Court (and Parties) at least five days prior to Perm. Hearing
 - Must Include Information Concerning:
 - Names of Parties
 - Date of Removal
 - Location and Type of Facility where child is placed
 - Basis for why child should remain in custody
 - Statement as to availability of relatives for placement
 - Documentation regarding efforts for child to remain in the same school
 - Description of Services
 - Permanency Plan
 - Services being provided to 14 year old to assist in transition to independent living
 - When TPR is recommended – description of recruitment efforts for permanent placement

QUESTIONS / OTHER OBSERVATIONS?

- Hon. Maureen Wood – Maureen.wood@rockdalecountyga.gov
- Chris Hempfling – Christopherhempfling@gmail.com